

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT FOR EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Talent Management in Academia

Evidence From a Spanish Public Technical University

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Preface

This Research Assignment was carried out during the autumn semester of 2019 at the Department of Management (OE) at The Barcelona School of Industrial Engineering (ETSEIB), Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya. The assignment describes the result of a research in Talent Management conducted by two exchange students from Chalmers University of Technology, executed at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya.

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Abstract

This research investigates Talent Management in academia and serves both as an evaluation of the scientific research on the topic to this day and as an attempt to identify Talent Management practises in academia and comparing the theory of existing research with the reality in academic context. The purpose of this research is to explore the subject of Talent Management with regards to the practises of identification, selection and retention of academic talent. The research aims to provide contribution to the existing research within the subject of Talent Management.

This research consists of a literature review of the current research available on Talent Management in academia. To examine the application of the theory found in the literature review a survey was conducted at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC) in Barcelona, Spain.

The results of the survey show that there exists both similarities and differences between the existing research and the applications at UPC. Regarding the identification of talent, it can be concluded that the definition of talent is not unanimous. Furthermore, the perception on if and how talent can be measured is also divided. To reach a stronger conclusion, more research must be conducted, preferably within different contexts. The results also show that in the selection of academic talent, recruiting through networks is the most common practice. In the practices of retaining academic talent, the results from the survey display that individuals in an academic environment seem to value flexibility and networking as key factors for wanting to stay employed at their current university.

In order to continue the research in Talent Management in academia, we suggest that more focus should be invested in understanding the contextual differences that may exist due to different contexts and environments.

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1

Introduction

Ever since the term *The War for Talent* was coined in the end of the 1990s as a result of a research by McKinsey (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, and Michaels, 1998), and later also a book with the same name (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod, 2001), the subject of Talent Management (from now on referred to as TM) has been under a growing interest and development. According to Chambers et al. (1998), the war for talent can be won, but to do so the companies must turn TM to a key priority in their organization.

1.1 Background

The meaning of *Talent* is far from unanimous (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz, 2013). Since there has been problem in defining talent and therefore also the definition of TM, research has been made with the objective to understand the concept of talent within specific contexts (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, et al., 2013) and also identify the dominant theoretical frameworks of TM (Gallardo-Gallardo, Nijs, Dries, and Gallo, 2015).

The subject, TM in academia, is still in early stages in the development. There are few previous studies in regard to the subject. The subject is still in the phases of defining talent, so the application of the subject has a bit left to go. Therefore, the subject can be seen as being in the early exploratory phase.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the subject, TM in academia, with regards to practices within identification, selection, retention of academic talent. Furthermore, the aim is also to contribute to the scarce base of research within the subject, and to see if previous research can be applicable and generalized to public universities within the subject of technology in Spain.

1.3 Research Question

The main research question of this research assignment is:

How are talent in academia viewed upon at public Spanish universities with regards to identification, selection and retention of academic talent?

To further expand the research question, the following question will also be investigated:

Which practices are being used within identification, selection and retention of academic talent?

1.4 Scope

Within the framework of this assignment, a couple of limitations has been identified. Since the research is conducted under a time limit of one semester, restrictions in terms of depth and extension of the research has been made. This mainly affects the size and the extent of the case study which is limited to include one university: Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain. This university was chosen due to the ease of access to a relatively large sample in the case study as the authors of the report has personal ties to the university.

The chapter on the theory of TM has a deliberate focus on studies and research from Europe and North America since the university in which the theory is later analysed against is geographically situated in a country with similar demographical and cultural settings.

2

Method

This part of the assignment covers the methods used in the research with the aim of answering the research questions. The introduction of the report is followed by the chapter on theory regarding TM in academia. The following chapter addresses the results of the conducted survey, which will be described in this chapter. The report ends with a discussion containing an analysis of the result, a conclusion, acknowledges of the limitations, and some recommendations for future research.

2.1 Theory

The chapter on the theory is equivalent to a literature review on TM in academia. The literature review was conducted through an assessment of the current research available on TM in academia. This was carried out through searches for academic publications in different online databases. The databases used were: Google Scholar, UPC Digital Library, and Chalmers Library. In the searches the following key words were used: "Talent", "Academia", "Talent Management", "Human Resource Practises", "Academic Careers".

The theory based on the literature review were then divided into three main parts: *The Identification of Academic Talent*, *The Selection of Academic Talent*, and *The Retention of Academic Talent*. In each of this parts, different concepts, strategies, practises, and dilemmas are raised in relation to TM in academia.

2.2 Survey

To be able to make a comparison between the available research and opinions with the implementations in reality, in this case a public technical university in Spain, a survey was conducted. The questions asked in the survey were divided into two parts. One part considers questions about demographics with the aim of identifying different stakeholder groups. The other part considers questions derived from the

main parts from the literature review regarding TM in academia.

The survey consisted of a questionnaire distributed in English, Spanish and Catalan (attachment A, B and C). The survey was distributed online through the survey tool myEnquesta provided by UPC to the academic personnel at two different schools at UPC: Barcelona School of Industrial Engineering (ETSEIB) and Castelldefels School of Telecommunications and Aerospace Engineering (EETAC). The possibility of answering the questionnaire consisted of the time period between 2020-01-07 and 2020-01-14. Out of the collected answers, the incomplete answers were disregarded before the results were analysed.

To guarantee anonymity and confidentiality for the respondees, the answers to the questionnaire were deleted at the same time as the research were finished by the date of 2020-01-31.

2.3 Results & Discussion

The chapters on results and discussion are describing the results from the survey and how the results are interpreted. The results are analysed in connection to the literature review, with the aim of identifying similarities and differences. The discussion ends with conclusions, acknowledges of the research limitations and recommendations for future research.

3

Theory

This chapter is the result of a literature review on TM in academia. The structure of the literature review is based on three main components: *The Identification of Academic Talent*, *The Selection of Academic Talent*, and *The Retention of Academic Talent*. The chapter raises different concepts, strategies, practises and different dilemmas that exists related to TM in academia.

3.1 The Identification of Academic Talent

To be able to identify talent, you have to know what you are looking for. The definition of talent is essential for the understanding of TM and how one approaches the different practices and strategies implemented (Thunnissen and van Arensbergen, 2015).

3.1.1 Definition of Academic Talent

With a multi-dimensional approach to talent, Thunnissen and van Arensbergen (2015) have conducted an empirical analysis with the aim to define talent in Dutch academia. They asked different stakeholders (board members, managers, policy officials, talented employees and grant panel members) to describe their view on academic talent. Their findings show that a talented individual in academia is commonly seen as a person with certain characteristics: intellectual characteristics, social characteristics, intrapersonal characteristics and performance. Among the named characteristics, Thunnissen and van Arensbergen (2015) claims that talent can be seen as a combination of three components: abilities, intrapersonal characteristics and performance. These components can be further divided into smaller components. *Abilities* refers to scientific understanding, academic expertise, innovation, entrepreneurship, consciousness of environment, communication skills and cooperation skills. *Intrapersonal characteristics* refers to motivation and drive, personal effectiveness and fast development. *Performance* refers to experience and

above average performance. A talented individual in academia can therefore be described as a person who has a great scientific understanding and expertise, are highly motivated and driven, have a passion for science, and also are able to communicate well and inspire others (Thunnissen and van Arensbergen, 2015).

To further deepen their conclusions, Thunnissen and van Arensbergen (2015) identifies that the perception of talent also differs noticeably between the different stakeholders. Based on the frequency of mentioned characteristics, the different approaches to talent can be compared between the different stakeholders. There exists different values in talent identification in different stakeholder groups (e.g. board members, managers and policy officials values performance and academic skills highly when talented employees instead values motivation and drive in combination with academic skills). This enhances the conception of talent identification being subjective, and one cannot ignore the impact of context (Thunnissen and van Arensbergen, 2015).

3.1.2 The Influence of Context

On the subject of context, Thunnissen and van Arensbergen (2015) argues that the identification of talent can not only be seen as a set of characteristics, but that the organisational context and the environmental influence has a major impact. TM is highly dependent on context and to understand how to approach TM in an organisation one must understand the context and setting of the organisation (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, and Scullion, 2019). The effect of context should be considered to a greater degree in research (Johns, 2017), and to develop TM research further, the impact of context should be acknowledged and incorporated more thoroughly (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, et al., 2019).

3.1.3 Definition Dilemmas

When it comes to identifying, selecting and developing talent in academia there are some difficulties that can be viewed upon as dilemmas. According to Thunnissen and van Arensbergen (2015) there are five common dilemmas which are described below. The first dilemma describes the difficulties with identifying and selecting talent. Should one look at a candidate's record to see if the candidate has proven to be talented or should one look at the candidate as if the individual has the potential to be talented and thereby if the candidate can be moulded toward talented employees? The second dilemma elevates the problem regarding the identification of talent. Should one measure talent or should one identify talent by subjectively perceive talent. More concretely, should one measure the amount and quality of articles produced by an individual or should one look for unmeasurable things, e.g. motivation and drive. Since the prerequisites depends on a lot of factors (e.g. field of study) what amount of articles produced makes one a talented researcher? Is

a researcher with the worst possible prerequisites that can produce just one high quality article a talented researcher? The third dilemma relates to the question of who does one need to compare an individual to in order to determine if she is talented? Depending of the group, if one looks at the whole world or just looks at its own department, the perception of, if a person is talented or not, will change. The fourth dilemma is strongly connected to the way a person views talent, is talent a singular person who will, with some guidance, excel at their profession or is talent a group that might not individually excel but they work hard in order to excel collectively. How can one differentiate between similar talents? Which kind of individual is worth investing time and money on in order to develop talent? The fifth dilemma regards to who actually decides the definition of talent. During the selection phase, there will be some criteria in order to select a candidate that seems to be talented. Since the perception of talent varies between individuals, the criteria for selecting the candidate will vary depending on who is leading the recruitment.

3.2 The Selection of Academic Talent

Based on how academic talent is defined and identified, one can continue working with the selection of academic talent. There are different recruitment strategies identified which are presented below, accompanied with several dilemmas that can occur.

3.2.1 Recruitment Strategies

In order to fill a vacant spot in academia there are different ways to handle this. Depending on which field of study the vacant spot is the strategy for filling that spot might differ. According to the study of van den Brink, Fruytier, and Thunnissen (2013) there are three areas of study that uses different recruitment strategies. The three areas are: *The Humanities*, *The STEM Fields* and *The Medical Sciences*.

The humanities area is characterized as a *sellers' market*, which means for every job opening there are a lot of candidates applying. Although the openings are communicated publicly the position is often filled by what is called a *crown prince* or *crown princess*. This is someone that has been trained for that specific position while working at a lower position. When the day comes where the higher position becomes vacant the *crown prince* or *crown princess* will get the position. This results in a high amount of recruitment via internal circuits (van den Brink et al., 2013).

In the STEM fields the most common way to fill a position is by using informal network scouts. The reason for this is that is a *buyers' market* the competition for academics are high and universities try to head hunt great academic talent from other universities. By going under the radar, it is harder for other universities to

retain their talent if they don't know about the job opening. Usually it is hard to recruit someone from another university this way, and therefore the conditions, in order to get the talent to switch, needs to be very favourable. This could include higher salary, more funds and equipment, but it can also be things like if the new university has a higher research reputation, this might be favourable (van den Brink et al., 2013).

In the medical science field is much like the STEM field as it is a *buyers' market*. However, the talent is mostly recruited internally early on during medical school or postgrad education. The highly talented students are then evaluated in talent reviews, where the professors argue on the behalf of the young talent in order to help them fill the opening. The result from this is that the relationship between the professor and the student is key in order for the student to get a career in academia. The fate of the young talent lies in the hand of the professor who presents the individual in the talent review. Therefore, the recruitment system is often closed and when there is an opening, the talent is scouted and invited to apply (van den Brink et al., 2013).

Another aspect regarding the recruitment strategies are the time frame for the position to be filled. According to Ulferts, Wirtz, and Peterson (2011), one common trade off is whether or not an organization needs to fill the position as soon as possible and therefore chooses a speedy approach. On the other hand, if an organisation is not in a rush to fill a position, they might choose a slower approach. Furthermore, Ulferts et al. (2011) argue that the more speedy approach might not yield as many high quality candidates to apply. The trade-off then becomes real when an organisation needs to fill a position quickly and at the same time require high quality applicants. This results according to Ulferts et al. (2011) that recruitment processes which has a high quality requirement, most likely will be slower than the recruitment process for a position with a lower quality requirement.

3.2.2 Recruitment Dilemmas

When selecting and recruiting talent, it is inevitable not to encounter dilemmas. By examining recruitment and selection practises of academic talent in the Netherlands, van den Brink et al. (2013) have identified three dilemmas regarding talent management: *Transparency vs. Autonomy*, *Power of human resources vs. Power of academics*, and *Equality vs. Homogeneity*. C. Paisey and N. J. Paisey (2018) uses the three key dilemmas described by van den Brink et al. (2013) as a framework in a study where they examine the talent recruitment in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. van den Brink et al. (2013) and C. Paisey and N. J. Paisey (2018) agree with each other on several aspects regarding the dilemmas but are also disagreeing on some factors. Below are the three key dilemmas explained together with the authors different viewpoints on the various aspects.

Transparency vs. Autonomy

This dilemma is identified by van den Brink et al. (2013) as a struggle between an objective and controllable recruitment process versus the desire of academic freedom and a more subjective approach. They found that there exists discrepancy between the established protocols and rules for academic recruitment by human resource management (from now on referred to as HRM) managers and with their practical implementations. Despite that the recruitment process and selection are designed by HRM managers to guide decision makers in the process, the decision makers have their own agendas and approaches talent recruitment in a subjective way. van den Brink et al. (2013) detects a difference between HRM that focus on objectiveness, openness, formalisation, and transparency with decision maker academics that focus on academic freedom and tend to dismiss the above as too time consuming and bureaucratic. The differences between HRM managers and decision maker academics can be observed at all different stages of the recruitment process, which minimizes the possibility for transparency and openness. The exclusive tendencies are illustrated by an example where van den Brink et al. (2013) describes how elite academics in humanities and medical sciences tend to look for talent in their immediate vicinity. Although these elite academics often see themselves as best suitable for the recruitment, their limitations in time and resources describes a biased recruitment process where the decisions are made on incomplete information and where the flow of information is subjectively controlled van den Brink et al. (2013).

On the contrary to the findings of van den Brink et al. (2013), C. Paisey and N. J. Paisey (2018) found the recruitment process in their study to be transparent and conducted in a more objective manner. In the three contexts they used in their study (Scottish old, Scottish new, and Republic of Ireland universities) the transparency of recruitment can be illustrated by several factors. According to their study it is rarely occurring that the recruiter knows the recruits beforehand and the job descriptions are often published in an open appointment system. The factors described above are according to C. Paisey and N. J. Paisey (2018) describing a more transparent recruitment process in academia in relation to the conclusions by van den Brink et al. (2013). C. Paisey and N. J. Paisey (2018) also makes a remark on the simplification of reality when only comparing the distinction between transparency and autonomy without the variation of context.

Power of Human Resources vs. Power of Academics

According to van den Brink et al.'s (2013), HRM policies stress the importance of having an HRM advisor in order to advice the recruitment in terms of job profiles, the use of evaluation criteria, and internal career trajectory. The findings from van den Brink et al.'s (2013) study was however that HRM are merely a bystander, while the head of the departments possesses the power to execute the recruitment in their

preferred way. The view is somewhat shared by C. Paisey and N. J. Paisey (2018). They agree that HRM lacks certain power to influence the recruitment process and instead only plays a minor administrative roll in the process. However, C. Paisey and N. J. Paisey (2018) do not agree that the head of the departments are in control over the recruitment process. Their findings were that the recruitment process had begun to become more centralized, however instead of becoming centralized to the HRM departments the control over recruitment processes had climbed upwards in the hierarchy. This is mostly done by organization wide policies that spread across all departments. Whether the recruitment process tends to involve HRM more, being more centralized higher up in the hierarchy or if the head of the department has more influence, the recruitment process and outcome might be very different.

Equality vs. Homogeneity

In van den Brink et al.'s (2013) research, they found that, the academics involved in the process often decide which candidate is talented and which are not. The candidates that are often viewed as talented usually resembles the academic that chooses them in one way or another. It could be the way they view the field of study or even their appearance. Therefore, the candidates often can be seen as *clones* of their recruiter. According to van den Brink et al. (2013), this may hinder the diversity of the people in a particular field of study. The candidate chosen for the position might not even be the most talented. However, C. Paisey and N. J. Paisey (2018) do not agree, their research indicates the recruiters tend to have a more equality view and does not employ candidates that are an image of themselves. C. Paisey and N. J. Paisey (2018) do however discuss that this might be a result of a change in trends of what is popular in the market at that moment. At the same time their results also point towards that different countries tend to choose either equality or homogeneity. In their case, heads in the Republic of Ireland universities tend to recruit in a homogeneity manner whereas heads of Scottish universities tend to recruit in an equality manner.

3.3 The Retention of Academic Talent

When the recruitment of academic talent has been carried out, universities will have to try to retain their talent in order to be able to deliver a high academic performance (van Balen, van Arensbergen, van der Weijden, and van den Besselaar, 2012).

3.3.1 Retention Strategies

To retain academic talent there are different strategies and practises one can use in order to achieve this. In the sections below are some of the identified talent retention strategies described together with explanations on why they can serve as tools to preserve talent in the organization.

Career Development and Training

From a strategic perspective, training and development of talent can be seen as a part of a competitive strategy where performance improvement and competitive advantage is created by providing the academic workforce with training and development opportunities (Ulferts et al., 2011). In the study conducted by van Balen et al. (2012), where they researched determinators of success in academic careers in the Netherlands, the interviewees spoke of career systems as pivotal in the success of their careers. One opinion from the interviewees in the study is that the career system in the Netherlands is inflexible and limiting for talents. The individuals that have shown academic potential and qualities perceive that the universities lack perspective. The identified problems are divided in to two different kind of problems: *problems related to the career system* and *problems related to the HRM practises at the university*. The career system problems are often related to the lack of a predictable future due to the lack of vacant positions. The problems related to the HRM practises are connected to the problems related to the career system since the absence of career predictability leads to unkempt promises, low flexibility, and unclear career perspectives (van Balen et al., 2012). The importance of career development is confirmed by Thunnissen and van Arensbergen's (2015) conclusion that the stimulation and development of academic and intellectual abilities are important in academic TM.

Mentoring

The guidance and encourage of a mentor have a great impact on retention (van Balen et al., 2012). According to van Balen et al. (2012) the nurturing process of mentoring serves the purpose of helping a less experienced person with professional and personal development. With this guidance, the mentees experience career development and personal support. It can also affect and improve both the mentors and mentees collaboration skills. According to van Balen et al. (2012) there are evidence that the recievement of mentoring affect young academics career choices. In their research the interviewees expressed how mentoring influenced their decision to stay at the university. At the same time, the lack of mentoring in other cases, was one major factor for the academic's departure. Further van Balen et al. (2012) talk about how the stimulation from mentors and supervisors can influence the young academic into

career choices such as applying for different position. van Balen et al. (2012) are however clear about that mentoring by itself is not the only factor for retention, and they also point out institutionalised career systems as a factor.

Collaboration

One factor that can improve retention is the network that is available at the organisation and different collaborations that the organisation has. According to van Balen et al. (2012) social capital and networks are crucial for careers. New recruits therefore usually borrow the networks of the mentor to get a base network quickly. van Balen et al. (2012) argues however that new recruits should expand their network as soon as possible. This will result in career opportunities arising from the network. The new talented recruit more often chooses to advance within the network, rather than leaving it. In order to expand networks, further collaborations between organisations have started to increase. According to Ulferts et al. (2011) there are more advantages to collaborations than just expanding the network. It could be working with other organisations in order to develop promising individuals, share the cost of development, and training and allowing staff to visit other organisations to get insights and develop new skills. Ulferts et al. (2011) saw that collaborations between organisations are becoming more and more common, though they are hard to maintain. The biggest difficulties are mostly connected to management, weakness in the design of the collaboration, strategy formulation, and coordination. Ulferts et al. (2011) indicates that these problems should be manageable with a clear effective cooperation strategy.

4

Results

After conducting the survey, 46 answers were collected. However, 24 of the 46 responses were only partially completed. The partially completed responses were deemed unusable and were therefore discarded. The final result was therefore based on 22 complete responses.

The demographics of the respondents was spread out through all the categories available in the questionnaire. There were however some demographics that were overrepresented, the majority of respondents were; male, between 40 and 60 years old, Associate Professors, have been employed at the current university for more than 15 years.

4.1 Characteristics of Academic Talent

The answers to *"Which characteristics do you believe best describes academic talent of professors/lecturers/researchers etc.?"* was grouped according to the different aspects that arose from the answers. If a respondent brought up more than one aspect all their aspects got grouped. The most frequent aspects that were communicated was: Communication, Creativity, Perseverance, Curiosity, and Management (Table 4.1).

Characteristic	N times mentioned
Communication	8
Creativity	7
Perseverance	4
Curiosity	4
Management	3

Table 4.1: Characteristics of Academic Talent

When it comes to Communication, the respondents described it differently. Some underlined the skill of effectively transmitting knowledge and skills to the students,

and some underlined the importance of explaining concepts and theories in the simplest terms and with real life analogies. Creativity was used in a sense of innovation and ingenuity. It was used in a context of both research and teaching. Perseverance was mentioned by a few respondees, usually just as a word by itself but also together with dedication. Some respondees mentioned the thirst for knowledge and as some puts it, Curiosity. Management was used in the sense of being able to prioritize between teaching, research etc. However, some respondees also saw it as being able to create high quality research groups.

4.2 Measuring Academic Talent

When the respondees were asked *"Do you think their talent in academia can be measured, if yes please explain how?"*, with their talent relating to the talent of professors, lecturers and researchers etc., 14 respondees answered yes and 8 respondees answered no.

All of the 14 individuals that believe that talent can be measured gave examples on how they think this can be achieved. In this category of respondees, 11 of them mentioned elements that can be associated with objectively measurable results related to publication of research, quality of research publications and collected funding for research. This group of respondees mean that the quantity of published research articles is a way of measuring academic talent. In addition to the quantity of articles, almost every one of the 11 individuals in this group argues that the quality of research is important in regard to the level of academic talent. Quality of research can according to the respondees be associated with number of citations, the impact of the research and publications, publications in highly regarded academic journal.

Out of the 14 respondees that believe that talent can be measured, 6 of them mentions aspects related to more objectively methods of measuring academic talent. Examples of this is the quality of teaching which includes abilities to explain complex concepts, guiding students in their development, and how the lectures and exams are evaluated by students. Another example mentioned in this category is the involvement and participation in social activities apart from teaching and research.

Out of the 8 respondees that believe that academic talent cannot be measured, 4 of them explained why they think that this is the case. They mentioned examples related to the problem of evaluating talent, e.g. that soft skills are difficult to evaluate, that the measuring methods are likely to be biased, that there exists many kinds of talent and that the complexity of the term requires separate methods, and that since talent can be seen as something intuitive it will therefore be impossible to measure objectively.

4.3 Job Advertising

When asked about how the respondents first got the information about their current position being available, 17 out of 22 answered *"A colleague/friend told me about the open position"*. 5 out of 22 of the respondents answered *"Read about it on the web"* and 0 respondents answered *"Read about it in the newspaper"*.

4.4 Job Satisfaction

In the responses to the question *"What is important for you to feel satisfied at your university? And how does the university provide that for you?"*, 4 major areas were mentioned. The areas were: Freedom, Students, Networking, and Benefits/Salary. The responses about freedom was in regard to freedom in choosing which research projects they wanted to work on, freedom with working hours and also freedom in how they should conduct their teaching. In the responses in regard to Students, the respondents underlined the interaction with students, recognition from students and enthusiasm from the students as important factors. The university provides recognition in the form of the class evaluation survey, but whether or not the university helps with providing enthusiasm of and interaction with the students is not mentioned in the responses. When it comes to Networking, the respondents underline the importance of being able to share ideas, meet and talk to other researchers, help other researchers and receive help with their research projects. There is no consensus with regards to if the university provides the opportunity or not. Some respondents say that the university organizes talks and allows participation in conferences that enables networking, some says that they would like to see monthly or weekly meetings between researchers to share ideas and support their research. The last area that the respondents talk about, Benefits/Salary, is less frequently brought up than the rest of the areas. Here the respondents mostly brought up benefits that they would like to have, for instance, fresh fruit. In regard to salary, some respondents expressed that a high salary was important. At the same time the respondents did not share the same view about their salary, some thought it was too low and some thought the university provided the salary that they deserved.

4.5 Incentives for Changing University

Regarding the last question, *"What incentives would make you consider a position at another university"*, 7 people said that there are no incentives for them to move to another university. The respondents elevates salary once more, but again there is no consensus. Some say that they would consider another university if the salary was higher, and some say that they would not want a higher salary than they have

right now. Regarding teaching, some say that they want less hours teaching, and some say they want more. A couple even explained that they would like to be able to teach using alternative methodologies. Another thing that the respondees mentioned was that an interesting intellectual challenge would make them consider another university.

5

Discussion

5.1 The Identification of Academic Talent

Regarding the identification of academic talent, and specifically the definition of academic talent, a comparison can be made between the results of the survey and how the theory defines academic talent. According to the theory, a talented individual in academia is commonly seen as a person with a combination of three components: abilities, intrapersonal characteristics and performance. Our main results were grouped into 5 different characteristics: *Communication*, *Creativity*, *Perseverance*, *Curiosity*, and *Management* (Table 4.1). These 5 characteristics contains different parts that relates to the abilities, intrapersonal characteristics and performance described by Thunnissen and van Arensbergen (2015). With *Communication* relating to the skills of effectively transmitting knowledge and skills to students together with the importance of explaining concept and theories efficiently, it is strongly related to the abilities of scientific understanding, academic expertise and communication skills. When the respondees spoke about *Creativity*, they were referring to creativity in a sense of innovation and ingenuity. These aspects are strongly related to the ability of being innovative and to think outside the box. The characteristic of *Perserverence* were mainly spoken about in terms of persistence in their academic challenges and actions together with dedication. These characteristics is associated with the intrapersonal characteristics of motivation, drive, and personal effectiveness. With *Curiosity* referring to the thirst for knowledge, it can also be related to the intrapersonal characteristics, more specifically the abilities of motivation, drive and fast development. The characteristic of *Management*, relating to the ability of prioritize between teaching, research etc., can be associated with the abilities of consciousness of environment, communication skills, cooperation skills, but also the performance of experience.

In the conducted survey, though answers from different stakeholder groups were collected, the answers were mainly obtained from a specific stakeholder group of males between 40 and 60 years old, employed as associate professors at the current university for at least 15 years. We can see that we have a wide range of definitions and perception on the view of academic talent in this stakeholder group alone. This adds to the opinion that identification and definition on talent, in this case academic

talent, is a complex construct that needs to be researched further.

In regard to the different practises and strategies of measuring talent, we would like to enlighten an interesting finding. When comparing how the respondees answer regarding if and how they believe that academic talent can be measured with how they answer when they are describing academic talent, we see that their answers does not align. Their opinion on previously discussed characteristics on describing academic talent, such as communication, creativity, perseverance, curiosity, and management, are all strongly related to abilities and intrapersonal characteristics. When describing the methods of measuring academic talent there is a frequent mentioning of performance-based measurable factors, often related to quantity and quality of publications. We would therefore argue for that there might exist a discrepancy between people attitudes toward how they would describe talented people and how they would measure talent. According to our results, it is unclear if the measure of academic talent is a direct result of how one defines talent.

Our finding regarding the differences in defining and measuring talent can, in our opinion, partly be explained by the definition's dilemmas described by Thunnissen and van Arensbergen (2015). One of the dilemmas discuss if one should look at a candidate's record and previous achievements (e.g. publications) or if one should look for candidates with potential to be talented and future talents. Another dilemma elevates the question if one should measure or subjectively perceive talent, which can relate to either measuring publications or look for more of unmeasurable things such as drive a motivation. In line with these dilemmas our results explain that our stakeholder group seem to describe academic talent as something subjective, but when asked about methods of measuring academic talent they seem to associate it with an objective perspective.

5.2 The Selection of Academic Talent

In Spain there are regulations on how public universities can, and are only allowed to, publish their job openings (European University Institute, 2018). Even though the regulations state that there are specific ways they can spread the information about the vacant spot, 17 out of 22 of the respondees got the information from their friends/colleagues. This is in line with the views of van den Brink et al. (2013) and their research of how the STEM field recruits people. It seems like people are likely to apply to jobs after talking to their networks. However, there are some differences since Spain has regulations about job advertisements. The use of head hunters are not allowed for the public universities in Spain, but ones network can be seen as informal headhunters, if a colleague or friend informs one or even persuades one to apply for the position. Because of the regulation of job advertising the recruitment process does also look a bit like what van den Brink et al. (2013) found in the humanities field of study. The humanities area could be seen as a seller's market where the job openings are communicated publicly, just as they are at UPC as a

result of the regulations.

Regarding the dilemma Transparency vs. Autonomy by van den Brink et al. (2013), they found that academics that focuses on academic freedom in a recruitment processes tend to dismiss the focus on objectiveness, openness, formalisation and transparency, due to being time consuming and bureaucratic. Even though the questionnaire lacks the perspective of the recruitment process, it shows that the majority of respondees got informed about their positions through their network. This could be seen as a tendency of dismissing the transparency and bureaucracy. However, the Spanish regulations of recruitment advertisement for public universities, the bureaucratic recruitment, remains. The question then arises, what would happen if the regulations were eliminated? Would the recruitment process become less open and formal or would it remain the same?

5.3 The Retention of Academic Talent

One thing that van Balen et al. (2012) mentioned is that in regard to career development and training, the absence of career predictability leads to low flexibility. At the same time the respondees from the survey concluded that flexibility, or freedom as mentioned above, is a major factor for job satisfaction. One could draw the conclusion that UPC should therefore ensure their career system and their HRM practices in order to give a high flexibility to their employees and therefore be able to retain their employees. However, whether or not the need for flexibility from the respondees and the low flexibility created from lack of HMR and career system refers to the same meaning of flexibility remains unclear.

From the questionnaire it became obvious that networking was a major factor for satisfaction at the employment. This is also in line with what van Balen et al. (2012) found in their research. Both the respondees and van Balen et al. (2012) explains the importance of being able to use a network in order to, for instance, share insights and learn from each other. Whether or not these collaborations and networks are meant to be between different organisations are not specified in the respondees answers. One other thing that van Balen et al. (2012) elevates is that new career opportunities arises from people's networks. This is something that the questionnaire confirms, since the majority of respondees were first informed about their current position through their network.

5.4 Conclusion

According to the data gathered in the questionnaire, the view on if talent can be measured is still divided. For those believing that talent in academia is measurable,

the most common used practice is by looking at the quality and quantity of publications. However, as previously discussed, there is a tendency for those claiming that talent in academia is measurable towards a discrepancy between which characteristics that describes academic talent, and how to measure it. The different opinions of the sample could be explained by the influence of context. Some academics from the sample might be in a field of research where everything is measurable, and some might be in a field of study where everything is debatable. With regards to which field of study one belongs to their view on identification of talent might be altered. This adds to the opinion from earlier research (Thunnissen and van Arensbergen, 2015; Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen, et al., 2019) that context matters and that that the impact of context must be researched further in relation to TM in academia.

With regards to the selection of talent in academia, even though there are regulations for how the public universities in Spain can advertise the job openings, the practices are still similar to what van den Brink et al. (2013) have found within STEM universities. The respondees in the survey confirms that they are being informed about the vacant positions through their professional networks.

When it comes to the retention of talent in academia, flexibility seems to be one of the main factors. This is in line with what van Balen et al. (2012) found in their research. However, if flexibility is related to the HMR and career system which van Balen et al. (2012) mentions needs further investigation. The other major factor for talent retention on academia is network according to the results, is the permissibility and encouraging of networking on the job. Even this is in line with van Balen et al. (2012) findings. The practices could be by conducting monthly meetings for researcher to share ideas and help each other, to encourage people to attend seminars and conferences, or to conduct meeting points for the academic staff.

5.5 Acknowledge of Limitations

The conducted study does have some limitations. One being the fact that the research was based on 22 responses. In order to draw more concrete and evidence-based conclusions the number of participants in the study should be higher. The use of questionnaire is always a limitation when it comes to decoding and understanding what the participant actually means with their statements. There could be some misinterpretations when studying the participants answers, since there is no way of asking follow-up questions and thereby ensuring the meaning of the participants statement. When finalizing the Catalan and Spanish responses the answers were translated into English, using Google Translate. The translation of the responses might have led to misinterpretation, misleading or unintelligible answers.

The study was conducted on one public technical university in Barcelona, Spain. To get at deeper understanding, the study should include more different universities in Spain. The conclusions from the discussion is hard to generalize when all the data

comes from the same place.

The time aspect of the research is a limitation. Since the research was limited to one semester, a deep, comprehensive, analysis was not possible. Since the semester spanned from September to January, a lot of days was unusable due to Catalan and Spanish holidays.

Since the chapter on the theory of TM was deliberately focused on studies and research from Europe and North America, the framework that was used in order to analyse the questionnaire, could have been biased to these cultures. The usage of a framework based on studies from other places of the world might have provided a different analysis.

5.6 Future Research

In order to validate the conclusions of this article even further, the scope should be widened, and the future research should include more universities in Spain. The scope should include both public and private universities to see the difference between the recruitment processes, since the private universities are not controlled by the same regulations when it comes to recruitment.

The next step could also be to include different types of universities with regards to the teaching subject. Since UPC is a technical university it is categorised as a STEM university. It would be interesting to see if the findings of this project are in line with what other, for instance humanities universities, are doing as well.

In order to give a more in depth understanding, the next step for this research would be to conduct interviews with academic staff. This would ensure that their statements would not be misinterpreted, and also to explore the subject even deeper.

The last step would be to go outside the Spanish borders in order to see similarities with different countries. This would give a pointer to just how generalizable the conclusions are.

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A

Questionnaire - Talent Management in Academia: a UPC Research Assignment (English)

A.1 Opening

Hi,

we are two exchange students from Sweden who are doing a reasearch assignment about talent management in academia and we would love you to take a few minutes to answer our survey.

The survey is fully anonymous. The answers will be used as a base for our conclusion and discussion in our research assignment. The assignment will be done at the end of January, and before the end of February the data will be deleted.

There are 10 questions in this survey.

A.2 Questionnaire

What is yor gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

How old are you?

- 19 or younger
- 20-30
- 31-40

- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61 or older

What is your current academic position?

- Open answer question

For how long have you been employed by your current university?

- less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 years or more

Where was your previous employment?

- At my current university
- At another university
- This is my first employment
- Other

Which characteristics do you believe best describes academic talent of professors/lecturers/researchers etc.?

- Open answer question

Do you think their talent in academia can be measured, if yes please explain how?

- Yes
- No
- Open answer question

How did you first get the information about your current position being available?

- A colleague/friend told me about the open position
- Read about it in the newspaper
- Read about it on the web

What is important for you to feel satisfied at your university? And how does the university provide that for you?

- Open answer question

What incentives would make you consider a position at another university?

- Open answer question

A.3 Ending

Thank you for time and input. If you have any questions or would like to see the research assignment when it is finished, please contact us at: sander.vorn@estudiant.upc.edu

Thank you for completing this survey.

B

Questionnaire - Talent Management in Academia: a UPC Research Assignment (Spanish)

B.1 Apertura

Hola,

somos dos estudiantes de intercambio de Suecia que están haciendo una tarea de investigación sobre el talento en la academia y nos encantaría que se tomaran unos minutos para responder a nuestra encuesta.

La encuesta se refiere al talento en el mundo académico y es totalmente anónima. Las respuestas se utilizarán como base para nuestra discusión en nuestra tarea de investigación. La asignación se hará a finales de enero y antes de finales de febrero se borrarán los datos.

Hay 10 preguntas en esta encuesta.

B.2 Encuesta

¿Cuál es su género?

- Masculino
- Femenino
- Otro

¿Cuántos años tienes?

- 19 años o menos
- 20-30

- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61 años o más

¿Cuál es su posición académica actual?

- Pregunta de respuesta abierta

¿Durante cuánto tiempo ha estado empleado en su universidad actual?

- menos de 1 año
- 1-5 años
- 6-10 años
- 11-15 años
- 16-20 años
- 21 años o más

¿Dónde fue su anterior puesto/posición?

- En la universidad actual
- En otra universidad
- Este es mi primer empleo
- Otro

¿Qué características cree usted que mejor describen el talento académico de los Profesores e Investigadores Universitarios?

- Pregunta de respuesta abierta

¿Cree usted que el talento en el mundo académico puede ser medido, si es así, por favor explique cómo?

- Sí
- No
- Pregunta de respuesta abierta

¿Cómo se enteró del concurso de la plaza que actualmente ocupa?

- Un colega/amigo me lo dijo
- Lo encontré en el periódico
- Lo leí en la web

¿Qué aspectos de su trabajo actual le hacen sentir más satisfecho? ¿Cómo la universidad le ayuda a conseguirlo?

- Pregunta de respuesta abierta

¿Qué incentivos le harían dejar su actual puesto de trabajo actual para irse a otra universidad?

- Pregunta de respuesta abierta

B.3 Finalizando

¡Gracias por su tiempo y sus comentarios! Si tiene alguna pregunta o desea ver el documento una vez terminado, póngase en contacto con nosotros en: sander.voorn@estudiant.upc.edu

Gracias por completar esta encuesta.

C

Questionnaire - Talent Management in Academia: a UPC Research Assignment (Catalan)

C.1 Obertura

Hola,

som dos estudiants d'intercanvi de Suècia que estan fent una tasca de recerca sobre el talent a l'acadèmia i ens encantaria que es prenguessin uns minuts per a respondre a la nostra enquesta.

L'enquesta es refereix al talent en el món acadèmic i és totalment anònima. Les respostes s'utilitzaran com a base per a la nostra discussió en la nostra tasca de recerca. L'assignació es farà a la fi de gener i abans de finals de febrer s'esborraran les dades.

Hi ha 10 preguntes en aquesta enquesta.

C.2 Enquesta

Quin és el seu gènere?

- Masculí
- Femení
- Un altre

Quants anys tens?

- 19 anys o menys
- 20-30

- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61 anys o més

Quina és la seva posició acadèmica actual?

- Pregunta de resposta oberta

Durant quant temps ha estat empleat en la seva universitat actual?

- menys d'1 any
- 1-5 anys
- 6-10 anys
- 11-15 anys
- 16-20 anys
- 21 anys o més

Quin era la seva anterior posició/lloc de treball?

- A la universitat actual
- A una altra universitat
- És el meu primer lloc de treball
- Altra

Quines característiques creu vostè que millor descriuen el talent acadèmic dels Professors i Investigadors Universitaris?

- Pregunta de resposta oberta

Creu vostè que el talent en el món acadèmic pot ser mesurat, si és així, si us plau expliqui com?

- Sí
- No
- Pregunta de resposta oberta

Com es va assabentar del concurs de la plaça que actualment ocupa?

- Un col·lega/amic m'ho va dir
- Ho vaig trobar en el periòdic
- El vaig llegir en la web

Quins aspectes de la seva feina actual li fan sentir més satisfet? Com la universitat li ajuda a aconseguir-ho?

- Pregunta de resposta oberta

Quins incentius li farien deixar el seu actual lloc de treball actual per a anar-se a una altra universitat?

- Pregunta de resposta oberta

C.3 Final

Gràcies pel seu temps i els seus comentaris! Si té alguna pregunta o desitja veure el document una vegada acabat, posi's en contacte amb nosaltres en: sander.voorn@estudiant.upc.edu

Gràcies per completar aquesta enquesta.